

Message Text

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SUBJECT: OUTCOME OF CRINTHIAN PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

REF: A. VIENNA A-51, FEB. 7, 1975

B. VIENNA 1777

SUMMARY: BIG SURPRISE OF ELECTION RETURNS WAS UNCHANGED
DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN NEXT PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY
WITH SOCIALISTS SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDING THEIR ABSOLUTE
MAJORITY. OUTCOME REPRESENTS BIG WIN FOR SOCIALIST
LEADER WAGNER AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY FOR PARTY EVEN
THOUGH PARTY SUFFERED SMALLY DECLINE IN PERCENTAGE OF
VOTER SUPPORT. OTHER THREE REGULAR PARTIES--PEOPLE'S
PARTY, FREEDOM PARTY, AND COMMUNIST PARTY--ALSO SUFFERED
MINOR SLIPPAGE IN VOTER SUPPORT. RECENTLY FORMED
SLOVENIAN UNITY LIST, WHICH PROBABLY DREW OFF SOME
VOTES FROM COMMUNIST, SOCIALIST AND PEOPLE'S PARTIES,
FAILED TO GAIN SEAT. LATTER DEVELOPMENT WILL PROBABLY
FORCE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS TO MAKE POLICY REASSESS-
MENT. END SUMMARY

1. MAJOR SURPRISE OF MARCH 2 CARINTHIAN ELECTIONS WAS
ABSENCE OF ANY SHIFT IN SEAT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW
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ASSEMBLY ALTHOUGH ALL THREE PARTIES IN PROVINCIAL

ASSEMBLY SUFFERED MINOR LOSSES IN PERCENTAGE OF VOTE. COMPOSITION OF NEXT ASSEMBLY WILL THEREFORE BE SOCIALIST PARTY (SPO)-20 SEATS, PEOPLE'S PARTY (OVP)-12, AND FREEDOM PARTY (FPO)-4. TAKING PART IN ELECTION WERE ABOUT 300,000 VOTERS OR ABOUT 89 PERCENT OF ELECTORATE. IN PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST FOR THREE MAJOR PARTIES, SPO HAD 51.4 (MINUS 1.7 PERCENT COMPARED 1970); OVP 32.4 (MINUS 0.1 PERCENT) AND FPO 11.8 (MINUS 0.3 PERCENT). ALL THREE MINOR PARTIES FAIRED BADLY AND FAILED TO WIN SEAT. COMMUNIST PARTY (KPO) TOOK TWO PERCENT OF VOTE AS DID RECENTLY ESTABLISHED SLOVENE UNITY LIST (KEL). SPLINTER REFORM PARTY RECEIVED 0.4 PERCENT. COMBINED MINOR LOSSES OF FOUR REGULAR PARTIES WAS BALANCED BY PERCENTAGE VOTE WON BY KEL AND SPLINTER REFORM PARTY, BOTH NEW TO POLITICAL SCENE.

2. BEGIN COMMENT: IN SPITE OF MINOR LOSSES, SPO WON MAJOR PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY IN DEFENDING ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF 20 SEATS IN VIEW OF MAJOR LOSSES OF UP TO TEN PERCENT IN 1973 COMMUNAL ELECTIONS OVER MINORITY ISSUE AND OF GENERAL EXPECTATION EVEN WITHIN PARTY OF LOSING AT LEAST ONE SEAT TO OVP. MAJOR CREDIT FOR EXCELLENT SOCIALIST SHOWING ATTRIBUTABLE TO SOCIALIST LEADER WAGNER WHOSE GAMBLE OF SHIFTING PARTY TO POLITICAL RIGHT AND TURNING ELECTION CAMPAIGN INTO NATIONALIST BROUHAHA CUT ANTICIPATED SOCIALIST LOSSES TO SLIGHT TRICKLE.

3. OVP CAN CLAIM EMPTY VICTORY OF HAVING UNDERGONE LEAST PERCENTAGE OF LOSS OF VOTES OF THREE PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT BUT ITS INABILITY TO OBTAIN WHAT CONSIDERED TO BE SURE ADDITIONAL SEAT IS DOUBTLESSLY SOURCE OF MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENT. UNSATISFACTORY SHOWING UNDER WHAT TERMED BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN SHAKEUP OF PARTY LEADERSHIP AT NEXT PROVINCIAL CONGRESS.

4. FPO, WHICH ENDED ELECTION CAMPAIGN HOPING FOR BEST BUT FEARING WORSE, IS RELIEVED THAT PARTY ABLE TO HOLD ITS OWN IN CONTEST IN WHICH TWO MAJOR PARTIES MADE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALL OUT EFFORT TO POLARIZE ELECTORATE INTO CHOOSING BETWEEN THEM. RECENT REFORM OF PROVINCIAL CONSTITUTION PROVIDES UNEXPECTED BONUS TO FPO BY ALLOWING IT TO RE-ENTER PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ON BASIS OF MARCH 2 VOTE DISTRIBUTION AMONG THREE PARTIES IN ASSEMBLY.

5. KPO PERFORMANCE CONFIRMED CONTINUING DECLINE OF PARTY'S FORTUNES AND ITS INCREASING INSIGNIFICANCE

ON REGIONAL POLITICAL LEVEL AS WELL AS NATIONAL ONE.

6. KEL FARED MUCH AS EXPECTED, GAINING SOME SUPPORT IN MIXED POPULATION AREAS BUT INSUFFICIENT NUMBER OF VOTES FOR ASSEMBLY SEAT. RESULT IS OBVIOUSLY DISAPPOINTING TO SLOVENIAN MINORITY LEADERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS WHO MUST NOW SEEK TO DEVELOP NEW APPROACHES TO GAIN THEIR OBJECTIVE OF FULL OBSERVATION BY AUSTRIA OF ARTICLE 7 OF 1955 STATE TREATY.

7. UNUSUAL NATIONALIST TONE OF 1975 CARINTHIAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND UNIQUENESS OF DOMINANT ISSUE (SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY) IN CAMPAIGN SUGGEST VERY LIMITED APPLICABILITY OF RESULTS AS FORECAST OF LIKELY OUTCOME OF 1975 FALL NATIONAL ELECTIONS. END COMMENT, HUMES

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